

# Newsline *Special Edition*

Montana Department of Transportation

November 2001



## TranPlan 21 Update 2002

From now until September of 2002 Montanans will see a lot of activity associated with the first update of *TranPlan 21*, Montana's transportation plan. MDT has hired the consultant team of Dye Management Group Inc., Cambridge Systematics Inc., and Economic Development Research Group for this important project. This special edition of *Newsline* provides background on the project, highlights the road ahead, and collects your feedback on what you think are the most important issues facing Montana's transportation system.

Adopted in February of 1995, *TranPlan 21* is Montana's first statewide multimodal transportation plan. *TranPlan 21* is also an ongoing process that identifies transportation issues in Montana, evaluates future transportation concerns, and establishes policy goals and actions to guide MDT in addressing these issues. This ongoing process includes biennial telephone and stakeholder surveys and the publication of a *TranPlan 21 Annual Report* that reports on transportation conditions and progress towards meeting Montana's transportation policy goals.

In the six years since *TranPlan 21*'s adoption, over seventy percent of the plan's actions have either been implemented or are underway. Updating *TranPlan 21* will ensure that MDT continues to

meet changing needs and expectations and allow MDT to address new policy priorities and customer concerns. At the request of the legislature, a major focus for the update is determining how we can best support efforts to improve Montana's economy through transportation policies and programs. Updating the plan will also ensure that *TranPlan 21* provides direction to MDT's performance-based process for selecting projects that address pavement conditions, congestion, bridge condition, and safety.

### TranPlan 21 Policy Direction

Overall, *TranPlan 21* has set the following transportation policy priorities:

- Preserve the transportation system (all modes).
- Maintain mobility.
- Increase multimodal transportation options.
- Improve intermodal connections.

Under these overall priorities, *TranPlan 21* sets MDT's policy direction in seven key areas: economic development, freight mobility, roadway system performance, access management, land use planning and transpor-

tation, public transportation, and bicycle and pedestrian transportation.

Following *TranPlan 21*'s direction, MDT has been able to preserve and improve Montana's highway system. However, MDT receives limited funding from state sources and is heavily dependent on federal dollars to meet new demands. A key policy consideration is the availability of funding to preserve and maintain the system in its current condition while addressing increases in demand.

For more information about *TranPlan 21* goals and actions, refer to the *TranPlan 21 Overview* or the *TranPlan 21 Annual Report*. These free publications can be requested by calling 1-800-714-7296 and can also be viewed at [www.mdt.state.mt.us](http://www.mdt.state.mt.us).



## Key Issues for TranPlan 21 Update

One of the products of *TranPlan 21* was the establishment of biennial telephone and stakeholder surveys through which MDT could get feedback from users of and stakeholders in the state's transportation system. These feedback mechanisms have revealed that, although overall satisfaction with Montana's transportation system is good, MDT's customers want:

1. Better roads and streets.
2. Year round access to rest areas.
3. Better, more frequent, and more available passenger rail services.
4. Greater investments in bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
5. More out-of-state airline service.
6. To be kept more informed about transportation issues.

Customers also believe economic development issues should be addressed in the highway project selection process.

The *TranPlan 21 Update* public involvement process will provide the opportunity to clarify and amplify those issues that concern Montanans.

## Recent Trends in Montana's Transportation System

The *TranPlan 21 Update* will address the following basic transportation trends facing Montana since *TranPlan 21* was adopted:

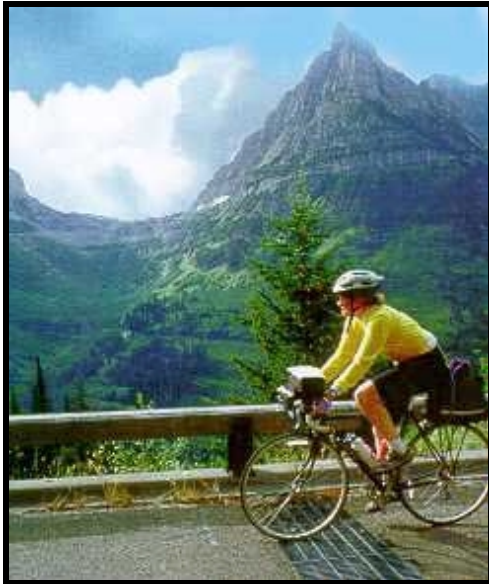
- **Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled:** In 2000, 20.9 million miles per day were driven on the state's roads, up from 19.9 million miles per day in 1995. While total miles traveled have increased throughout the state, growth has slowed in the last five years compared to the early 1990s. From a regional perspective, the western and south-central regions of the state saw steady growth, while the rest of the state has seen little or no growth over the last five years.

- **Vehicle Registration:** Automobile and truck registrations in Montana have increased by about one percent per year over the last five years .
- **Safety:** Driver safety on Montana roads remained steady between 1993 and 2000. Fatalities rose less than one percent per hundred million miles traveled, while injuries decreased by 0.10 percent per hundred million miles driven.
- **Congestion:** Measurements of congestion indicate that over the last several years, rural roads have remained relatively free of traffic congestion. However, there is localized congestion in some of Montana's urban areas and select rural corridors.
- **Roadway Infrastructure:** The total lane miles that MDT is responsible for have increased to almost 130,000 miles in 2000.
- **Pavement Conditions:** Overall, MDT has preserved roadway pavement conditions, while traffic volumes have increased. Current average pavement conditions range from good on Interstates and other major highways to fair on Secondary Highways.



- **Bridge Conditions:** MDT has focused efforts on improving the condition of bridges. The number of bridges needing improvements has decreased by 25 percent over the last few years.
- **Transit:** Transit operators provide scheduled and on-demand services in both rural and urban areas of the state. Ridership has grown at a significant rate over the last few years. Between 1994 and 1999, ridership grew at an annual rate of 4.4 percent statewide. Great Falls and Missoula experienced annual growth in ridership of six percent or more.

- **Bike/Pedestrian:** Pedestrian commuting in Montana has decreased over the last ten years. The 2000 Census indicates that pedestrians commuting to work in Montana has decreased by over 14 percent.



- **Air Transportation:** Seven commercial airports serve the bulk of air transportation needs of the state. These airports experienced six percent growth per year since 1995. Overall, 1.4 million passengers were handled by these airports. Essential air service airports had slight growth over the same period.



- **Rail Transportation:** Both passenger and freight rail activities increased in Montana over the last five years. Amtrak's Empire Builder continues to serve Montana's Hi-Line, providing essential services to rural and tourist destinations. Over the last 8 years, rail freight has increased in carloads and tonnage. However, continued consolidation of railroad ownership

and development of larger freight handling facilities has forced many shippers to move freight greater distances by road to ship Montana-produced commodities.

## Public Involvement is Critical for the *2002 TranPlan 21 Update*

*TranPlan 21* was the result of a collaboration between Montana residents, business owners, federal and state agencies, local governments, tribal officials, and transportation system users. The *2002 TranPlan 21 Update* will involve these same people and agencies. Extensive public participation allows MDT to determine and address major transportation issues.

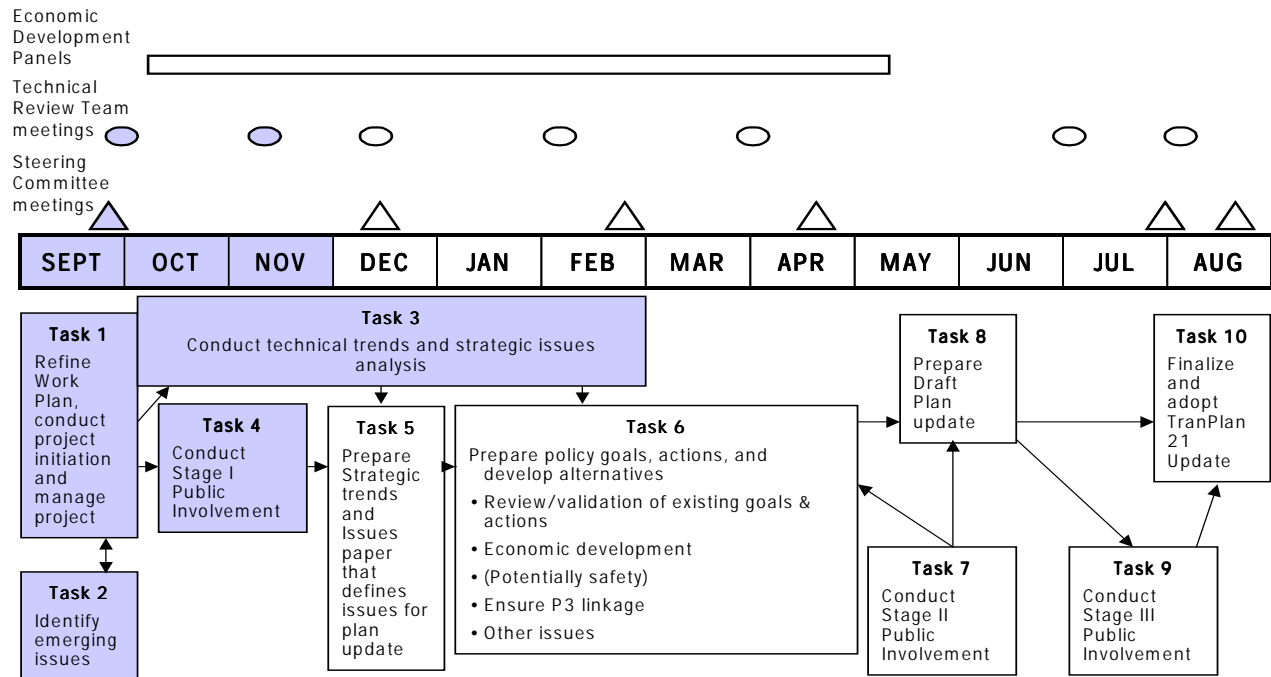
Customer input will be solicited before updating policy goals and actions, before drafting a plan update, and before finalizing and adopting the plan. These opportunities will give citizens the chance to identify and refine issues and concerns, provide input on alternative policy goals and actions, and review and comment on the draft plan update.



As Montana's primary transportation policy document, the *2002 TranPlan 21 Update* will benefit from input from ALL of Montana's citizens. You can help by filling out and returning the enclosed survey or by participating in the opportunities listed on the enclosed flyer.

# Plan Update Timeline

*TranPlan 21 Update* schedule beginning September of 2001:



5500 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of 20¢ per copy for a total of \$1142.02 which includes \$592.02 for printing and \$550.00 for distribution. Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592.

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